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THE

SHEPHERDESS

OF THE

ALPS.

A VERY

Interesting, Pathetic, and Moral History.

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THE

Shepherdess of the Alps.

IN that part of the Alps, amidst the high mountains of Savoy, very near the road that leads from Briancon to Modena, is a lonely valley, whose solitary aspect instils into the minds of all who travel through it a sort of pleasing melancholy. Three hills, in the form of an amphitheatre, on which some shepherds' huts are scattered at several distances, interspersed with clumps of lofty trees, streams tumbling down the mountains in cascades, and pastures ever green, compose the beautiful landscape of this natural scene.

Count Fonrose and his lady were returning from France to Italy, when their coach broke down as they were passing through the valley; and as the day was on the decline, they were obliged to look for some place of cover, where to pass the night. Whilst they advanced towards one of the huts, they perceived a flock of sheep, driven by a shepherdess, whose walk and air filled them with astonishment, and their hearts with the sweet accent of her melodious voice, which the echoes repeated in plaintive sounds.

How beautiful's the setting sun;
It's daily course now almost run,
We can behold its charms:
More pleasing are its fainter rays,
Than when in full meridian blaze.

Thus it will prove, said she, when, after a painful race, the weary soul arrives at the wished-for goal, and calmly drops into eternity, to renew its vigour in the pure source of immortality. But alas! how distant is the prospect; how slowly it passes away! In saying these words the shepherdess moved on, her head declined, with a supineness in her attitude which gave ease and dignity to her gait and mein. Struck with amazement at what they saw, and more with what they heard, the Count and Countess redoubled their

steps to overtake her. But what was their surprise, when, under the coarse straw hat and mean apparel, they met with every beauty, every grace. Pray, child, said the Countess, (finding she endeavoured to shun them,) be not alarmed; we are travellers, that an accident obliges to ask for shelter till morning in one of yonder cabins, be so kind as be our guide. I am very sorry, madam, answered the shepherdess, blushing and casting down her eyes, that you will be but ill accommodated, as these huts belong to very poor people. You live here, I suppose, said the Countess, and surely I may put up with the inconveniences for one night, when you undergo them continually. There is a wide difference, said the modest shepherdess; I am brought up to it. I cannot believe that, interrupted Count Fonrose, not able any longer to hide his emotion; no—you were not formed for such hardships. Fortune is unjust, or how is it possible that so lovely a person should be reduced to live obscurely, in so low and ordinary a dress? Fortune, replied Adelaide, (so was the shepherdess named,) is not to be blamed, but when she deprives us of what she has given us before. My condition has its sweets for one that knows no other state in life. Custom and example create wants for the wealthy, which the poor are ignorant of. It may be so with those that are born in this solitude, said the Count; but for you, charming unknown, you are not what you seem to be: your air, your voice, your language, all betray your disguise. These few words you have said, discover a noble soul and a cultivated education. O! tell us lovely creature, what cruel turn of fate has brought you to this condition? A man under misfortune replied Adelaide, has a thousand means to extricate himself; but a woman, in such cases, has no resource but in honest servitude; and in the choice of one's master, methinks, it is best to prefer the good and virtuous. You are going to see mine, and you will

be delighted with the innocence of their lives, and the candour and simplicity of their manners.

As she was still speaking, they arrived at the hut. It was divided by a partition from the sheepfold, into which the shepherdess turned her flock, counting them over with the most serious attention, heedless of the strangers, who beheld her with admiration. The old folks, such as presented Baucis and Philemon, received their guests with the honest simple courtesy which recalled the golden age. We have nothing to offer you, said the good woman, but clean straw for your bed, and a hearty welcome to such provisions as heaven affords us,—milk, fruit, and oaten bread. On entering the cabin, they were amazed to see the order and neatness that appeared every where in so poor an habitation. Their table was walnut-plank, finely polished by frequent rubbing; their earthen dishes and dairy pans shone with the nicest cleanness; every thing presented the image of contented poverty, happy to have wherewith to support the real wants of nature. It is our dear daughter, said the good old woman, that manages all our little affairs. At break of day, before she leads her flocks to the hills and dales, whilst they are nipping about our hut the sweet grass surcharged with the morning dew, she employs that time in putting every thing in the neat order and manner you see them placed.——What! said the Countess, interrupting her, is the shepherdess indeed your daughter? Would to heaven she was! replied the good creature. She is the daughter of my heart, and I have a mother's fondness for her; but I am not so happy as to have brought such perfections into the world, nor are we worthy of such honour. Who is she, then? whence comes she? What misfortune has reduced her to so low a station? All that is a secret to us. Three years ago she came here, in the habit of a villager, and offered to tend our flock. She would have been welcome to share our little, without taking

upon her that painful task; so much the sweetness of her person and behaviour engaged our hearts. We could not believe she was bred in a cottage. Our questions made her uneasy. We desisted from farther enquiry, as they seemed to disturb her. As our knowledge of her good qualities increased, so did our respect; but the more we strove to shew her that respect, the more she humbled herself before us. No; never had any child for its parents a more tender regard, a more constant care. She cannot obey, because it is impossible for us to command; but she dives into our hearts, and prevents our wishes when they are scarcely formed. She is an angel descended from heaven, to be the comfort of our age. What is she doing now in the sheepfold? asked the Countess. She milks the ewes and she-goats, fosters the young kids and lambs, and gives them fresh litter. The cheese she makes is thought delicious; no doubt for having been pressed with her neat hands. I carry it to the market, and have not near enough to supply all those that would be my customers. When the dear child is tending the sheep in the pasture, she employs herself in making works of plaited straw, which are admired by every body. I wish you were to see with what dexterity she weaves the osier plain twigs, and matts the tender flexible rushes. There is nothing, let it appear ever so perfect, but what she can improve upon. You see, madam, continued the good old dame, in all about you is the image of an easy, contented life; it was she that procured it,—it was she, this angelic creature, whose only study is to make us happy. But is she happy? asked the Countess. She does all she can to make us believe so, said the old pastor: but I have made my dame observe, that she oft-times returns from the pasture with a dejected look, her eyes still moist with tears; but soon as she sees us she affects a smile. It is easy to perceive there is some gnawing grief that preys upon her heart, the cause of

which we dare not ask. And then, said the old goody, what concern does she not give me, when, in spite of all our entreaties, the dear creature will, in the severest weather, lead abroad her bleating care. A thousand times have I requested her, in the most earnest manner, to let me now and then relieve her; but my requests have never been complied with. She rises with the sun, conducts the flock, and does not return till it sets, often shivering with cold. How is it possible, my dear parents, she would say, with all the tenderness of a loving child,—how is it possible that I should consent to let you leave your fireside, to be exposed, at your age, to the inclemency of the season, which I, young as I am, can scarce support? At the same time she comes loaded with faggots, which she gathers in the wood; and when she sees I am troubled at the fatigue she must undergo, Don't be uneasy, my dear mother, says she, exercise keeps me warm, and labour is fit for my age. In short, my dear lady, she is as good as she is beautiful. My husband and I never speak of her but with tears of affection. What if you were deprived of her? said the Countess. Why, answered the old shepherd, we should be deprived of all that is dear to us in the world; but if she is to be happier for it we should die content, and our misfortune would be our comfort. Oh! may kind heaven heap blessings on her head! There are none so great but what she deserves. I was in hopes her dear hands would have closed my eyes, for I love her much more than I do my life. Adelaide's coming in put an end to the conversation. In one hand she carried a pan of milk, and in the other a basket of fruit; and, after courtseying with a grace peculiar to herself, she set about the little household affairs as if she was not the least taken notice of. My dear child, said the Countess, you give yourself a deal of trouble. Not at all, madam: I endeavour to fulfil the intentions of the best of people, whose servant I am, to treat you in

the best manner with what their little can produce. But I am afraid, continued she—while she was spreading on a coarse table-cloth as white as snow—that you will but make a sorry meal: the bread is brown, but very savoury; the eggs are new laid, the milk fresh drawn, and the fruit fresh gathered, such as the season affords.

Diligence, attention, and modest deportment, in every minute duty of hospitality, were conspicuous in this wonderful shepherdess. After the frugal repast, Count Fonrose and his amiable lady retired to rest on the bed, though but of straw, which Adelaide had prepared for them. Is not our adventure surprising? Let us endeavour, said they, to unravel the mystery of this pretended sheperdess, invite her to accompany us, and make her happy if we can. At break of day, one of the Count's servants came to let his master know, he might proceed on his journey as soon as his honour pleased, for the coach was securely repaired. It was ordered up immediately; but before they left these honest folks, the Countess desired a moment's conversation with the young person who styled herself their servant.

Adelaide came to receive her commands. Without desiring to penetrate into the secret of your birth, or into whatever is the cause of your distress, I feel that I am sensibly interested in all that concerns your welfare. It is evident that your courage raises you above your misfortunes, and that you conform your behaviour suitably to your present circumstances. It is true, your charms and your virtues render your condition designed for you. It is in my power, amiable unknown, to alter it, as the Count's intentions are quite agreeable to mine. I want a bosom friend; and from what I have seen in you, I shall think myself possessed of an inestimable treasure, if you consent to be my friend and companion. Drive from your thoughts the least shadow of dependence; you were

not formed for servitude; and, should my fond prejudice deceive me, I would rather lift you above your birth than leave you below it. In short, I seek a real friend, one that I can confide in. Be not under any concern about these good people; I shall make up for their loss—at least so far as to enable them to pass the remainder of their days in peace and plenty—and from your hands they shall receive my constant bounty. The poor old folks, who were present, fell on their knees and kissed the Countess' hand, then turning to Adelaide, they conjured her, in the most pressing terms, to accept the lady's generous proposal. We cannot, at our time of life, be far from the grave; and as it has been your constant study to make our lives happy, so may our death leave you comfortless in this solitary place. The shepherdess, embracing them, and mixing her tears with theirs, returned a thousand thanks to their noble guests, with a sweetness that increased her charms. I cannot, said she, accept of your favour; heaven has marked my destined lot, and I submit to it; but I shall always, with the most grateful heart, acknowledge your goodness, and the name of Fonrose will never be absent from my memory. The only thing I request of you is, to bury this adventure in eternal silence, and never to reveal the fate of an unknown person, who is determined to live and die in oblivion. The Count and Countess redoubled their solicitations, but all in vain; she was immoveable. The travellers parted from their charming shepherdess to retirement.

During their journey, their conversation was taken up with this strange adventure, which appeared to them like a romance. They arrived at Turin, their imagination full of it, and you may be sure their desired silence could not be observed. The charms and virtues of this unknown shepherdess were inexhaustible sources of reflection and conjecture. Young Fonrose, their only son, was often present at their conversation,

and never let a single circumstance escape his memory. He was of that age when imagination is most lively, and the heart most susceptible of receiving tender impressions; but was of the character of those who keep the feelings of their sensibility within themselves, and which are so much more violently agitated when they burst from their confinement, as they have never been weakened by any dissipation. All the wonders he heard related of the valley of Savoy, raised in his soul the most passionate desire of serving her. The object which his imagination has formed is ever in his mind. He compares it to all he sees, and all he sees is lost in the comparison. The more his impatience increased, the more he took care to disguise it. Turin became insupportable: the valley where the inestimable jewel was hid was the loadstone which attracted his heart; it is there he places all his happiness; but how to get at it? If his designs are found out, what difficulties to surmount! His parents will never consent to the journey he intends. It will not be looked upon as the mere effects of curiosity, but be deemed a youthful folly, that may have bad consequences; and the shepherdess may be alarmed at his presence, and shun his addresses: if it is discovered, he loses her for ever. After three months' struggle, he determined to quit all for her alone, and, under the disguise of a shepherd, find her out in the lonely valley, and there remain till death, if he could not prevail on her to leave it. He disappeared. His father and mother missed him with great consternation, and waited his return with the greatest impatience. Their apprehensions increased more and more, and his absence continuing, the whole family was plunged into desolation. Their fruitless search and enquiries completed their distress; till at last these unfortunate parents were reduced to lament the loss of their only child. Whilst the afflicted family of Fonrose were in this dejection, the youth arrived in

the valley which had been described, and, in the habit of a peasant, presented himself to some neighbouring cottagers, and offered his services. His ambition is satisfied. He is accepted of, and a flock is committed to his care. At first he followed the sheep wherever they chose to feed, in hopes that chance would direct him to the same pastures where the solitary shepherdess fed her flock. The unhappy at some times, thought he, may listen to the voice of comfort. It is an aversion to the world, and the desire of a retired, quiet life, that detains her here. She will experience some tedious hours, when she will not be displeased to meet with a friendly intercourse, nor avoid a virtuous conversation. If I prove so happy as to make mine agreeable, I shall have great hopes of something more. If I gain her confidence, friendship will follow of course; and friendship, in different sexes, is nearly allied to love.

Whilst he indulged himself with these pleasing reflections, his eyes wandering on the beautiful scenes of the valley, he heard at some distance the very voice whose melody he had been so often told of, which raised an emotion in his heart as great as if it had been an accident unexpected. She sung the following words:—

Sweet Solitude! to which I fly,
Of every bless bereft;
There affliction's cup enjoy—
The only boon that's left.

These melancholy complaints pierced Fonrose's tender heart. Ah! whence the grief that consumes her! what pleasure to afford her comfort! He durst not as yet raise his hopes any higher. It might perhaps alarm her, if he yielded to his impatient longing to behold her; it was sufficient for the first time to have heard the sweetness of her voice. Next morning Fonrose went to the pastures, and having observed which way the lovely shepherdess directed her flock, he sat himself at the foot of the rock which the day before had echoed with her moving sounds. Fonrose, with all the grace of outward form, possessed every talent, every endow-

ment that the nobility study to attain. He played upon the hautboy as well as Beluzzi, of whom he had learned, and who was at that time the delight of the courts of Europe.

Adelaide, absorbed in melancholy, had not yet begun her melodious strains. The echoes were silent; when, on a sudden, that silence was interrupted by the sweet notes of Fonrose's hautboy. A harmony so uncommon filled her with amazement, mixed with some emotion. Her ears had never before been saluted, in such a place, but with the shrill squeak and buzzing hum of the rustic bagpipe. Motionless, with deep attention, she cast her eyes around, to find out from whence proceeded such divine music. She perceived, at some distance, a young shepherd sitting in the cavity of a rock, at the foot of which his sheep were feeding. She drew somewhat nearer, that she might hear him play more distinctly. Behold, said she, the effects of instinct! The ear alone has given this shepherd all the fineness of that charming art. What purity in the notes! variety in the modulations! what fire and brilliancy in the execution! Who then shall say, that taste is not the gift of nature?

Adelaide, for the first time since her retirement, felt her grief in some measure suspended. Fonrose, who saw her approach nearer, and sit down under a willow, to listen more conveniently, had given her no room to think he had perceived her; but took the opportunity, as soon as she had retired, to calculate the place of her flock, so as to meet her without affectation at the bottom of the hill, where the road that led to their different huts crossed each other. He gave her a look in a seemingly careless manner, as if he was wholly taken up with the guidance of the sheep;—but ah! what beauties were gazed on in that look! what eyes! what a mouth! what divine features! so moving in their languor! how ravishing would they appear in one animated with love! Affliction had added paleness, and

stole, in some degree, the blooming carnation of her cheeks. But of all charms, none struck him with so much admiration as her elegant shape and heir. Her easy motion was that of a young cedar, whose straight and smooth stem yielded to the gentle impulse of the zephyrs. The charming image which love engraved in his heart occupied all his thoughts, and filled his soul with irresistible passion. How faintly, said he, was she described! The lovely beauty is unknown to the world, whose admiration she deserves. She, that would grace a throne, lives under the thatch of a cottage, employed in the low occupation of tending the flocks. In what poor garments does she appear! But she embellishes every thing, and nothing can commend her. What! so delicate a frame doomed to such a laborious life!—homely food!—straw her bed! O heavens! she hath the thorns—for whom dost thou preserve the roses? Sleep put a stop to those flattering ideas, but did not banish from him her lovely image.

Adelaide felt herself somewhat touched with Fonrose's youth and comeliness, nor could she help reflecting on the capricious turns of fortune. For what purpose, thought she, has nature endowed this young shepherd with such graces? Alas! those gifts, haply useless in his station of life, might prove the source of misery in a higher station. What is outward form? what is beauty? Wretched as I am, is it for me to fix their value? This reflection embittered the rising pleasure she had indulged in; she reproached herself severely, resolving never to give way to it again.

Next day, Fonrose imagined that she affected to avoid his coming near her. He was cast down at the very thought. Does she suspect my disguise? Have I discovered myself? These uncertainties perplexed his mind,—his hautboy was neglected. Adelaide was not far distant, but could have heard the sounds had he played upon it. She could not guess the cause, and began to sing in her old melodious strains.

Ye pretty birds, whose pensive notes
My lamentations join,—
Ah! what avails your warbling throats?
Can they sooth woes like mine?

All seem around to share my grief,
As if to assuage my pain;
But mine admits of no relief,
And comfort speaks in vain.

Fonrose, moved to his inmost soul with her complaining, so melodiously expressed, could not refrain from taking up his hautboy. She continued, and he accompanied her sweet voice.

Never was an unison more harmonious. Is this an enchantment? thought Adelaide. May I believe my senses? It is no mean shepherd,—it is some supernatural being that I have been listening to. Nature may give a vent, but great masters and unremitting practice alone can reach to such perfections. As she was thus musing, the valley resounded with a rural, or rather divine symphony. Adelaide imagined she saw realized those prodigies which poetry attributes to music, her brilliant sister. Astonished and confused, she could not determine whether to approach or retire. Meanwhile, the young shepherd was collecting his flock, to lead it back to the cottage. He is not conscious, said she, of the pleasure he communicates around; he is not the least vain of his perfection; he does not expect the praises I owe, which are so justly his due. Such are the sweets of music! It is the only talent that finds enjoyment in itself,—all others must have witnesses, or else partakers. Music was a gift from heaven, bestowed upon man in his state of innocence; it is the purest of all pleasures, and the only one that I can yield to. I look upon this as an echo, that comes to repeat my grief.

Fonrose, in his turn, affected to avoid her. Adelaide was concerned at it. Alas! said she, I gave myself up too easily to the little comfort I felt; I am deprived of it for my punishment. One day, as they

met as if by chance, Shepherd, said she, do you lead your flocks to any great distance? These few words, uttered from her sweet lips, caused in Fonrose's heart such an emotion as almost deprived him of his voice. I cannot tell, replied he, with hesitation; it is not I that lead my sheep, it is my sheep that lead me,—they are better acquainted than I am with these pastures, and I let them range wherever they please to go. From whence came you? said Adelaide. I was born on the other side the Alps. And were you brought up to a shepherd's life? No doubt, since I am one, I was destined for it. That is what I can scarce believe, she replied, gazing on him with fixed attention; your talents, your language, your air,—all convince to the contrary. You are very good, answered Fonrose; does it become you to tax nature for bestowing her favours with a sparing hand on those of your condition—you, whom she has formed more for a queen than a sheperdess? Adelaide blushed, and waived the discourse. The other day, said she, your hautboy accompanied my voice with such masterly art, as must seem a prodigy in one brought up to feed the flocks. It is to your singing, replied Fonrose, that is so rare in a simple shepherdess. What! were you never instructed? Like you, I have no other guide than my heart and my ear. You sung—I was moved; what my heart feels my instrument expresses—I breathe it in my very soul. That is all my secret—nothing is more natural. It is incredible, said Adelaide. I thought so too, replied he, while listening to your voice, and now I am convinced of it: though nature and love will sometimes bestow, in a frolic, their choicest favours on the meanest objects, to show there is no condition, be it ever so low, but what they can ennoble.

Whilst they thus discoursed, advancing through the valley, Fonrose, animated by a small ray of hope, began to make it resound with the rapturous notes that pleasure inspire. Ah, cease, cried Adelaide,—spare

me the image of a sentiment I never more shall feel. This solitude is consecrated to grief,—all here join with my lamentations. I am not without woes, said the young shepherd, fetching a deep sigh, which was followed by a pause of silence. What has caused your afflictions? of what do you complain? Is it of mankind? is is of fate? I really cannot tell. All that I know is, that I am far from being happy;—pray, enquire no farther into my situation. Hear me, said Adelaide: Heaven has made us acquainted, to be a mutual support to each other's woes; mine are a burden, under which my heart sinks even to despondency. Whoever you be, if you are unhappy you are compassionate—I believe you are worthy of the confidence I wish to repose in you; but you must promise me that the confidence shall be reciprocal. Alas! said Fonrose, my woes are of a nature perhaps never to be relieved. Meet me to-morrow, said Adelaide, at the foot of the hill, under the spreading oak where you heard me moan; I will there reveal that which will excite your pity. They parted. Fonrose passed the night with great inquietude: his fate depended on the disclosure—he dreaded the discovery of a tender, unhappy passion. If she loves I am undone.

He set out to the rendezvous, and the fair shepherdess arrived soon after. The morning was overcast with clouds, as if nature had presaged their sorrowful conversation. They seated themselves under the oak, when, after a profound sigh, Adelaide thus began

THE STORY OF HER WOES.

Beneath those stones you see there, almost covered with the creeping grass, lie the remains of a most faithful and virtuous man, whom my love and imprudence brought to the grave. I was born in France, of a wealthy family, and of high distinction; too wealthy, to my misfortune. Count Oreston conceived for me the most tender, passionate love, to which my heart corresponded with equal warmth. My parents objected to our union, and refused their consent. Hurried on by my passion, I agreed to a private marriage—sacred to virtuous souls, but disapproved of by law. Italy then was the seat of war. My husband was

ordered to join the corps he was to command, and I went with him as far as Briancon. There my foolish fondness prevailed on him to stay with me three days, which he passed with extreme reluctance. I sacrifice, said he, my duty for you. But what had I not sacrificed for him.

He afterwards set out, with a foreboding that terrified me. I accompanied him to this valley, where we took leave of each other, and I returned to Briancon. In a few days a report of a battle was spread about. I was sure my dear Oreston was there. I wished it, for his honour—I feared it, for my love. At length I received a letter from him, (which afforded me great comfort,) informing me that, on such a day, at such an hour, I should find him in the valley, under the same oak where I had bade him farewell: that he should be alone, and desired to meet me unaccompanied,—adding that he only lived for me. Alas! how inconsiderate I was! I saw nothing in his letter but his impatience to rejoin me, and that impatience was to me very flattering. I was exact to the appointment. Oreston received me tenderly. Ah, my dear Adelaide! said he, you would have it so. I have failed in my duty, at the most important crisis of my life What I feared is come to pass. The battle was given; my regiment charged, performed wonders of valour, and I was not at its head. I am dishonoured for ever—lost without risk; I have but one sacrifice more to make you, which I am come to consummate. At these words I pressed my dear husband in my arms. I felt my blood congeal in my shivering heart,—I fainted dead away. He seized that opportunity to perpetrate his design; and I was recalled to life by the report of the fatal pistol that gave him his death. How can I paint the dreadful situation in which I was left? It cannot be described. These tears, that must for ever flow,—these sighs, which suffocate my voice, give but a faint idea of my distress. I passed the night over the bloody corpse, quite stupified with grief. My first thoughts were, as soon as I was able, to bury it and my shame together. These hands dug his grave. I do not mean to move your compassionate heart; but the moment in which the earth was to separate me from the dear remains, was a thousand times more dreadful than can be that which divides the body from the soul. Depressed with grief, deprived of food, my feeble hands were two days employed in performing this last sad duty; and I then formed a determined resolution to remain in solitude till death unite us. Gnawing hunger preyed upon my vitals, and I thought myself criminal in preventing nature from supporting a life more insupportable to me than death. I changed my dress for that of a simple shepherdess, and I look upon this valley as my only asylum. Ever since, I have had no other comfort but that of weeping over his grave, which I hope will soon be my own.

You see with what sincerity I open to you my inmost soul.

Henceforth I may weep in your presence without restraint—a relief my overburthened heart stands much in need of. I expect you will put the same confidence in me. Do not imagine that I am imposed upon,—I am certain, that you are no more a shepherd than I am a shepherdess. You are young—perhaps in love; for, if I guess aright, our misfortunes flow from the same source. The similitude of our conditions will make us feel the more for each other. I look upon you as one that heaven, moved with my afflictions, has sent into this solitude to save me from despair. I look upon you as a sincere friend, capable of giving, if not satisfactory advice, at least a firm example of true resignation to the Divine will.

Ah, madam! said Fonrose, overwhelmed with what he had heard, whatever tender sensibility my heart is prone to feel, you are far from imagining with what deep concern the recital of your woes has affected me, —the impression will remain as long as life. What! must I have a secret, nay, even a thought, reserved from you—from you, who have a right, after what you have entrusted me with, to scrutinize my very soul? But, as I told you before, and as my foreboding heart apprehended, such is the nature of my woes, that I am doomed to conceal them in eternal silence. Be not offended, charming friend, at a silence which is my greatest torment. You are very unhappy, but I am more unhappy still. I will be your constant companion—I will endeavour to mitigate your sorrows, and help to ease you of an employment too laborious for your delicate frame. Let me be a partaker of your grief; and when I behold you weeping over the tomb, I shall mix my tears with yours. You never will have cause to repent having deposited your secret in an unfortunate heart, that feels all the value of its trust. I do repent it already, said Adelaide, with some confusion, and retired without farther discourse. On her abrupt departure, she saw in Fonrose's countenance all the marks of an affected mind. Alas! said she, I have renewed his sufferings. Oh! what sufferings must they be, that can give him grounds to think himself more unhappy than I am. No more music—

no more conversation. They neither seemed to seek nor shun each other. Looks, that spoke their thoughts, were all their language,—it was very expressive.

When he found her weeping over the grave of her husband, he beheld her in mute attention, full of jealousy, grief, and pity, till her groans were echoed by his. A few days were past in this painful conflict, when Adelaide took notice how the young man wasted away, like a blooming flower just blasted by some malignant planet. The grief that consumed him gave her much concern, as, not being entrusted with what occasioned his trouble, it was out of her power to administer any comfort. She little knew, that she herself was the cause of his distress. It is an observation founded on nature, that when the soul admits of two passions, the one will weaken the other. Adelaide's regret for the love of Oreston grew less, in proportion as her pity increased for the young shepherd. She was sure that her pity proceeded from no motive but what the most innocent friendship suggested, nor did it ever occur to her not to give way to it; and seeing the young man plunged in such a settled melancholy, she did not think it incumbent on her, after what she had professed for him, to leave him any longer to himself. Unhappy youth! said she, the first time they met after her resolve, you perish daily, and give me the fruitless concern of beholding you consume away, and not be able to afford you any comfort. If the recital of my imprudent conduct has not altered your opinion of me,—if the most sincere friendship is dear unto you,—in short, if it will not make you more unhappy than I was before our acquaintance, tell me, I conjure you, the cause of your afflictions? Is your secret yet more important than mine? You need not apprehend that I will ever divulge it. Oreston's death is an eternal barrier betwixt the world and me. The secret of your woe, which I desire to be acquainted with for your own sake, not for mine, shall never be divulged, but

will be deposited in my husband's tomb, with his faithful widow and your sincere friend.

I hope, said Fonrose, it will be my fate to die first. Ah, madam! let me end my deplorable life, without leaving you to reproach yourself with having shortened it. O heavens! she cried, what have I done? Can I have contributed to increase the woes under which you perish? Ease my tortured heart, and tell me what I have said—what I have done, to aggravate this affliction? Speak, I say; you have revealed too much to hide yourself any longer—I do insist upon knowing who you are? Since you will force from me so peremptorily the fatal secret, know that I am—that I am Fonrose, the son of those you so lately filled with admiration and respect. All that I have heard them relate of your virtue and your charms, inspired me with the rash design of seeing you under this disguise. I have seen you, and my fate is fixed. I have left my family in the deepest distress,—they think that I am for ever lost,—they lament my death. I know what is your attachment here, and I have no other hope but to die adoring you. Forbear to give me any useless advice; my resolution is as immoveable as your own. If by betraying my confidence you divulge my secret, you will only disturb the last ebbings of my declining life, and will have to impute my death to yourself. Astonished at what she had heard, Adelaide endeavoured to soothe young Fonrose's despair. I will restore him, she inwardly said, to his bereaved parents, and save their only hope from death.—Heaven has procured me this opportunity to acknowledge their goodness. She therefore diligently employed every means the most insinuating friend could suggest to calm and comfort him. Sweet angel! cried Fonrose, I see with what reluctance you are compelled to make any one wretched: your heart is devoted to him who lies in that grave—no power on earth can draw it away. I see with what condescension your virtue at-

tempts to veil your unhappiness—I feel your goodness in its full extent—I sink under it, and I forgive you. Your duty is never to love me, and mine is to adore you for ever. Adelaide, impatient to put in execution the design she had formed, arrived at the hut. Father, said she to the old pastor, do you think yourself able to undertake a journey to Turin? I want a person that I can rely on to carry the Count and Countess Fonrose intelligence of what concerns their whole happiness. My zeal, said the old man, to serve them, will give me strength equal to my inclination. Go then, continued she, you will find them at present lamenting the death of their only child. Inform them that he is living; that the poor Adelaide will return him to their arms. But at the same time tell them, there is an indispensible necessity for their coming in person to fetch him. He set out immediately, and soon arrived at the Count's house in Turin. He sent in word, that the old man of the valley of Savoy was come to wait on him. Ah! cried the Countess, perhaps some misfortune has befallen our lovely shepherdess. Bid the old man enter, said the Count; who knows but Adelaide consents to come and live with us. It would be, replied the Countess, the only comfort I can taste after the loss of my son. The old man was introduced; he embraced their knees—they raised him to their arms. You weep, said he, for the death of your son, and I am come to inform you that he is alive. It is our dear child that has discovered him in the valley, and dispatched me to communicate to you this interesting news. Whilst he was speaking the Countess fainted away, overcome with surprise and joy. Assistance was called in, and she soon revived. They embraced the old shepherd by turns, and acquainted the family with the reason of their transports. How shall we show our gratitude? said the Countess. How can we requite a boon that restores us unto life? They set out immediately, and soon arrived at their

journey's end. They left their equipage at a distance, and walked to the hut. Adelaide was tending her flock. The old dame conducted them to the spot where she was. How great was their surprise, when they beheld their beloved son with the shepherdess, under the habit of a simple pastor. Ah, cruel child! cried Fonrose's mother, throwing her arms about his neck, what trouble you have given us. What could induce you to leave your affectionate parents, and seclude yourself here? To adore her whom you yourself so much admire. Madam, said Adelaide, whilst Fonrose embraced his father's knees, you would not have been so long a prey to grief, had I sooner discovered your dear son. After the first burst of joy was over, Fonrose relapsed into melancholy. Come, said the Countess, let us repose ourselves in the cabin, and forget the woes this young madman has plunged us in. It is too true, said Fonrose to his father. What but the deprivation of reason could have made me forget the most sacred ties of nature—what, but madness! You are the innocent cause; I am in love—hopelessly, distractedly in love, with the most amiable of women. You have seen little—know but little of this incomparable lady. Honour, virtue, and sensibility! she unites all that is great and good. I cannot be happy without her, yet she never can be mine. Has she then trusted you with the secret of her birth? asked the Count. I have learned enough, replied he, to ensure you it is not inferior to mine in wealth or nobility; she has renounced all to remain in this solitude. Do you know what motive induced her to it? I do; but it is a secret she alone can reveal. Is she married? No: she is a widow; but her heart is not the less engaged —nay, rather bound by stronger ties. Madam, said the Count, as they entered the cabin, you see how you captivate and turn the heads of all that bear the name of Fonrose. Nothing could have justified my son's extravagant passion, but so virtuous, so lovely an ob-

ject. My wife's utmost wishes were to have you for a friend—my son cannot live without you for a wife—and it would be my greatest happiness to have you for a daughter. Consider how many who love you would be wretched, if you refuse your consent. Ah, sir! replied Adelaide, your goodness perplexes me: lend me awhile your attention, and judge my situation. She then related her sad story, adding the name of her family, which the Count knew perfectly; and she finished her narration, by taking him for a witness of the inviolable fidelity she owed her husband. They were thunderstruck at her words. Young Fonrose threw himself down in a corner of the hut, to give vent to his bursting grief. Madam, said the afflicted father, turning his eyes on Adelaide, behold the effects of your resolution. The Countess embracing her exclaimed, Will you then give us cause to lament a second time the death of our dear child? Why did you restore him to us? The good old people fixed their moistened eyes on Adelaide, anxiously awaiting her decision. Heaven knows, says she, I would willingly give up my life to acknowledge your unbounded generosity. It would be the height of my misery, had I to upbraid myself with being the cause of yours. My fate is in the hands of your son; let me have a few minutes conversation with him. Fonrose, said she, after they retired, you know what sacred ties bind me here. If I could cease to lament the loss of him who loved me beyond discretion, I should be deservedly despised. Friendship, gratitude, esteem, are all I have left to give; and is that a compensation —a suitable return for such unbounded love? This is the sole cause of my objections. When I behold you all in a situation that would soften the most obdurate heart—and mine, alas! is but too sensitive—I cannot endure the thought of being the cause. How can I hear your generous, honoured parents reproach me with their loss? I will forget for a while what I am, and leave you arbitrator of my destiny. It is yours to de-

cide: Which is most agreeable to you?—Either to conquer your passion and strive to forget me, or take the hand of one whose heart is dead to love—who has nothing to bestow but friendship and esteem. It is enough, replied he tenderly; such exalted friendship equals love. I may perhaps be jealous of the tears I shall see you shed for a former husband; but the cause will only make you more estimable in my eyes, and dearer to my soul. She is mine! cried Fontrose, rushing into the arms of his fond parents. It is to the respect and gratitude she bears you that I owe all my happiness. Adelaide could not appeal from it. Did she consent merely through pity and gratitude? I believe she did—she believed it herself, and I will not cease to admire her the less for it.

Before she left the valley, she revisited the grave, which she quitted with regret. O my dear Oreston! she cried, if from the mansions of the dead thou canst see my struggles, and read my oppressed heart, thy shade will not murmur at the sacrifice I make for a virtuous family. I go to make others happy—my love remains with thee. She ordered a monument to be erected to his memory; and that the cabin of the good people, who were to accompany them to Turin, should be altered to a neat country house, as plain as it would be solitary, where she intended to retire now and then to lament the errors and misfortunes of her youth.

Time, and the unremitting tenderness of Fonrose, joined to the sweet pledges of their union, opened her heart to receive the impression of a second love. She is looked up to as a model of perfection, and enjoys the admiration and respect of all.

> Great blessings ever wait on virtuous deeds,
> And, tho' a late, a sure reward succeeds."

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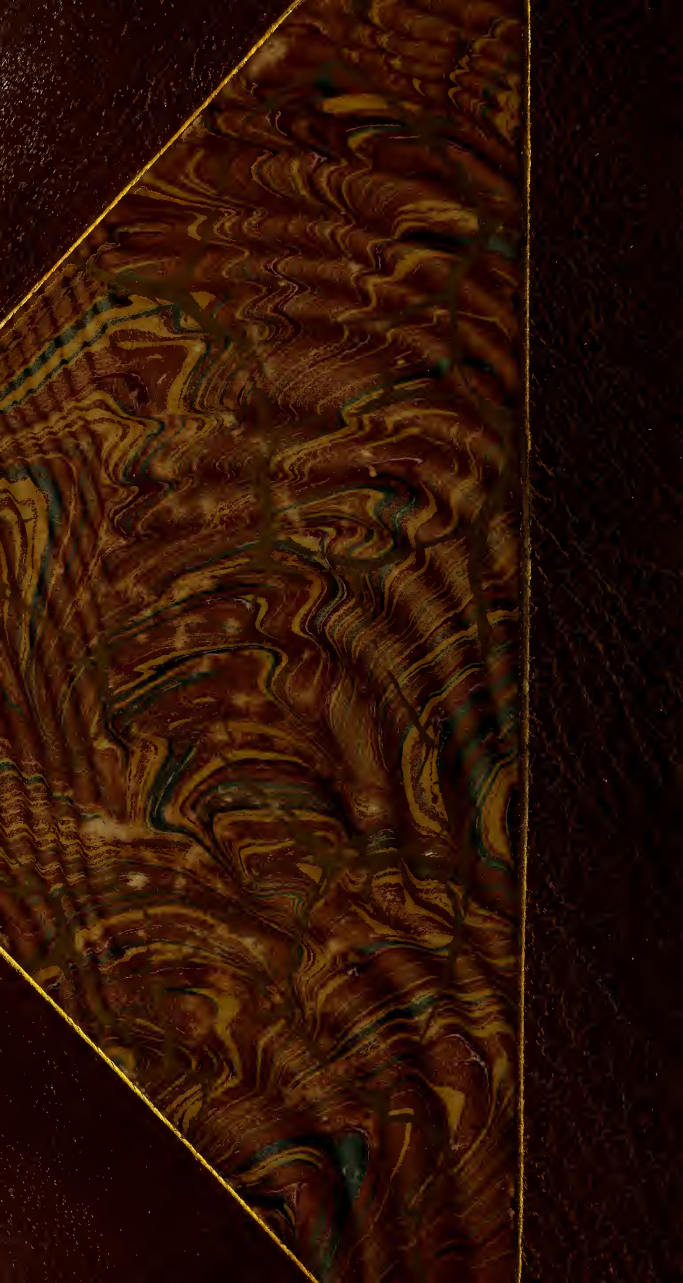
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